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ABSTRACT

This document discusses the need for cooperation and assistance from the psychological professions in law enforcement agencies. The author relates his personal experiences as a consultant to a police department, and outlines several steps to promote and maintain effectiveness within the agency. Mutual respect and a willingness to become a good listener become key components to acceptance within the force. In opening up a line of communication, the consultant must demonstrate to his charges a willingness to take many of the risks which they do. This active involvement in police routine serves two purposes: (1) it helps the consultant develop a sense of confidence in the men with whom he is expected to work; and (2) he is able to gain first hand insight into the problems a policeman encounters in his work. At no time should consultation and psychotherapy become confused. The psychologist must not provide therapy when his contact calls for consultation. A psychological consultant can render an invaluable service by augmenting the effectiveness of policemen in problems ranging from community relations to domestic affairs. (PC)

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GUIDELINE FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS IN POLICE CONSULTATION

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Historically, law enforcement in both metropolitan and rural sections of our country has been left exclusively in the hands of senior members of the local department in terms of recruitment procedures, program development and training, as well as implementation and operational procedures. Those were the days when a police officer was probably considered competent to do his job if he could shoot a revolver and knew the penal code of his local district (Flynn and Peterson, 1972). There is reason to believe that this was all that was reasonably needed in order to maintain law and order in our society. Therefore, it is understandable that no outside or ancillary personnel were needed to develop and implement an effective training program for a prospective police candidate. However, it is only too well known by now that as this society has undergone a series of changes in terms of personal values, morals, and philosophies of life, that the traditional system of training has not only become antiquated but it has also become equally as inefficient. With this obvious recognition, new techniques have become mandatory at every level of police activity. Needless to say, the aforestated observations have evolved primarily as a result of an industrial revolution which seems to have no end to it in terms of developing a society that becomes continuously more complex with the passage of time. Police science has witnessed the society develop from the horse and buggy as a form of transportation to space ships which are capable of transporting man to the

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moon and returning him to earth safely. With this kind of rapid change, it seems quite unwise to predict where society will go or what it will be doing in the very near future. In any event, it is already past the stage where outsiders must take an active role in the field of police science. The role of outsiders in police science cannot be clearly defined at this time and it may well be a blessing in disguise that such roles cannot be clearly delineated. This is so in that once a role is defined and one begins to function in terms of the mandates of that role, it too often becomes difficult to get the necessary persons engaged in assessing the effectiveness of duties performed in that role, and thus necessary changes are too frequently not made. Therefore, a loosely defined role of any ancillary personnel who takes an interest in police science seems to be the wise approach. Pomrenke states this viewpoint very well as follows:

> "Education implies change and can be regarded as a process or a product. Education as a process embodies all those activities that fit an individual for social or organizational living..."

The question that must be raised initially is, who should become involved in police science from among the "so called" civilian ranks? It seems that there is a place in the field for a variety of professional disciplines, e.g., psychology, psychiatry, social work, sociology and anthropology, only to name a few. The fact is, however, that most professional groups have steered clear of the field of police science except to freely speak out in a negative way by stating where police science is failing and what should be done to rectify its ineffectiveness. For many,

such negative criticisms seem to serve to exonerate professionals from their guilt feelings for what they are not doing to help develop a more efficient system of law enforcement from which we would all profit.

A perusal of the literature suggests that some psychologists and psychiatrists are beginning to accept some responsibility on their own part and they are "digging in" and lending a helping hand (Flynn and Peterson, 1972). This is a pleasant signal that since police science is headed in the right direction, and it will ultimately take its rightful position among the highly respected professions. This is not to suggest that psychologists and psychiatrists represent a panacea for the multitude of problems that currently exist in the field of police science. Far from it. Neither is it intended to suggest that police science is the only professional field which is plagued with problems which it is unable to solve satisfactorily at the time of this writing. Many of our professions are bombarded with problems which they are unable to solve, psychology and psychiatry being among them.

Numerous articles have been written and published by psychologists and psychiatrists outlining programs which purport to solve many of the problems which plague the profession of police science. The opinion of this writer is that the value of the articles published to date in terms of being real help to law enforcement agents range from those being quite helpful to others which are totally irrelevent and tangential to the issues. Needless to say, each professional psychologist who writes on the subject of solutions to problems in police science is sincere and

believes in what he writes. However, there is much reason to believe that some such writers are quite naive and write what they have developed in their own minds as a philosophy of police science, while others write from direct experience with police officers. Certainly a philosophy of any field is appropriate, but that philosophy must stand up to the test of empirical investigation if it is not to be rejected. This is where the empirical psychologist can and must play a vital role.

It is the purpose of this writer in developing this paper to share with the reading public, particularly those involed in or merely concerned with promoting greater efficiency in law enforcement, some of his own experiences of more than two years of consultation with one northeastern metropolitan police department and of shorter periods of time with two other departments in the same general geographic area. Consultation is a concept used by many with a multiplicity of meanings. Probably an important first step is to define, in operational terms, what the concept consultations means for this writer. A consultant is one who is an expert in his chosen profession and who shares his expertise with those less knowledgeable than he about his own discipline. Starting with this definition as an initial first step, one must make the assumption that the psychologist who consults to any law enforcement agency not only must be thoroughly familiar with his field but also must in turn assume that the agents of law enforcement are much more knowledgeable about law and how it is enforced than he is. Essentially, the suggestion is that there be mutual respect on the part of both parties involved. This is the essential ingredient in the psychologists efforts at establishing rapport,

an essential antecedent to any sincere and mutual confidence between the two. With this kind of relationship established, the psychologist has overcome the first hurdle towards becoming a respected and accepted member of the community of police science specialists. Does this mean that he is in there solid and free from suspicion? Emphatically no! Experience has taught this writer that a kind of neurotic paranoid halo will engulf the mentality as well as the motivation for some time to come, maybe days, weeks or even months. Understanding and perseverance become the essentials for overcoming this second and very difficult hurdle. He decided that he would not falter but would "hang in" because he knew there was causality underlying this suspicion and it was his duty to dispel every ounce of it within reason.

In order to dispel the suspicion which so thoroughly surrounded this writer he dedicated himself to becoming a good listener and to encourage his law enforcement cohorts to express their feelings both positive and negative. At no time would he communicate to them that he was sitting in judgement about anything they said. He listened with "interest" and tried as best he could to communicate that he both understood and empathized. This is not always easy to do. This writer continuously reminded himself that he had been invited to the agency because someone felt a need for his services which could not be obtained within the department. Therefore, as he sat and listened as well as observed in a very systematic way, he perceived himself as being in the midst of hurdle three, fact finding. A good consultant does not go into a law enforcement agency with his own

ready prepared bag of "tricks." He must go in with an open mind and also assume that the complaint which initiated his invitation is not necessarily going to be the real problem when he has fully explored the situation and gathered his own opinions. Much of literature which the writer has read has violated this very "Cardinal" Principal. Many of the same authors of such literature have complained of their efforts not being of any value or successful. The fault may well lie in their own approach and not in the men they were espousing to help. It is suspected that these psychologists have too often failed to appropriately respect policemen and therefore go in with the notion that a "cop" can't tell them anything. Therefore they must show them the way. This kind of attitude not only serves to stop the flow of communication but also delays the initial process of communication.

In opening up a line of free flowing communication, the consultant must demonstrate to his charges that he is willing to take many of the risks which they must take from day to day. This writer did exactly that by volunteering to ride in a cruiser with a lieutenant on an evening shift for four hours. Several incidents occurred during those hours, e.g., the car was stoned from behind the scene on two occasions and on another, the officer was falsely lured to a tenement house to dispel a domestic disturbance only to find that after climbing several flights of stairs there was no disturbance; however, the windshield of the cruiser was shattered when we returned. On a second occasion the writer walked the beat from 4:00 P.M. to mid-night with a foot patrolman in a dimly lit low income housing project. Although several minor infractions occurred both arrived

back at the station house safely for the change of shifts. This is not to suggest that every consultant must go this far although it is sincerely believed by this writer that such experiences do at least two things of great importance for the consultant: (1) they help him in developing a sense of confidence in the men he is expected to work with and (2) he is able to gain first hand insight into the problems a policeman encounters in his work. In this way it seems reasonable to assume that the consultant is in a better position to be of service with this additional data gathering process. Gormally (1972) recommends such activities as described above and refers to them as the consultant getting his hands "dirty" with real police activity. In this way, he suggests that the consultant forms an appreciation for the stresses, job demands, and community pressures on the individual officers. Essentially Gormally is advocating that the consultant have some field experiences. Pomrenke (1972) on the other hand, recommends much emphasis on simulated situations and role playing as a technique to be used by the consultant. This is all well and good, but it seems to be a second best alternative to actually getting out into the field and getting one's hands "dirty."

It is crucial at this point to observe that the consultant has served both as case consultant as well as agency consultant but at no time did he allow the contacts to take on psychotherapeutic proportions. Consultation and psychotherapy must not become confused; therefore one must refrain from doing therapy where his contact calls for consultation and, of course, the converse also holds true. Bard and Berkowitz (1967)

presented an interesting and innovative program of training for purposes of facilitating greater efficiency among policemen in crisis intervention as well as prevention via use of consultation. As was pointed out by Gormally (1972), a consultant may enter the police precinct at any level ranging from helping in the development of a recruit selection procedure to working with top administrators. In-service training programs with men who have been on the force for several years can often need the help of a consultant on both a group as well as an individual basis. Flynn and this writer began their work at the recruit selection level only to move on to aid in program development and conducting in-service workshops in addition to working with men whose work was impaired by personal problems that they did not wish to discuss in groups. Personal problems ranged from domestic problems at home to alcoholism as well as to deep seated depression -- and feelings of isolation. It was amazing to learn not only that many men felt totally isolated but that they had no one to whom they could turn to about their problems, even their own wives.

Blanch, Neal, and Flint (1972) point out the invaluable service a psychological consultant can render to augment the effectiveness of policemen ranging from community relations to domestic affairs. They describe quite interestingly how the consulting psychologist can help based on their own work in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

After the consultant has thoroughly assessed the situation by talking with administrators and subordinates, as well as doing much systematic observation, he will then and only then be in a comfortable

position to take the next essential steps prior to entering into a contractual agreement: (1) he must candidly report to the appropriate official or officials his own perception of the situation and, (2) he must be in a position to explicitly tell them whether or not he has the necessary expertise to be of service. If he feels that he can, then conditions of the contract must be established. Only then will the consultant be in a position to help individuals as well as groups arrive at a variety of solutions to problems which they encounter. He never makes decisions, but merely helps the appropriate person to arrive at possible solutions. The ultimate decision must lie in the hands of those in positions to make decisions within the department.

It is always useful and beneficial if some form of evaluation or follow-up can be built into the program initially. However, this is not always possible and when it is not, the consultant must accept the reality of it. If however, an evaluation is built into the program, it must be done in such a way as to be instructive rather than destructive. Siemon and Fitzhugh (1972) summarize this point very well when they speak of feedback. They say that feedback should not be evaluative, i.e., it should not try to tell the recipient what he wants to hear. It should be descriptive. They go on further to say that evaluative statements tend to distort the truth, thus defeating the purpose of the feedback. These points are well taken, but this writer does not agree that evaluative statements necessarily tend to distort the truth. If the consultant is secure in what he is doing, he can make evaluative statements and base them on fact rather than fiction.

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